

Training Course in Reproductive Health/Sexual Health Research – Geneva 2008
Course Report
4 February – 5 March 2008

organised by

the Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research,
the UNDP/UNFPA/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of
Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP),
Department of Reproductive Health and Research, Family and Community Health Cluster
(WHO/RHR),

the Fonds Universitaire Maurice Chalumeau
the International Association for Maternal and Neonatal Health (IAMANEH)

and

the San Raffaele del Monte Tabor Foundation

in collaboration with

the Department of Health of the Canton of Geneva

the Faculty of Medicine, Geneva University

and

the Geneva Medical Association

In 2008 it was the 17th time the Research Training course was organized in Reproductive Health, and, parallel, for the fourth time also in the area of Sexual Health.

The objective of both courses was to train health care professionals in the area of clinical research, to enable them to identify the research needs in their countries and to perform research projects of high quality in the area of reproductive/sexual health.

The opening ceremony was held in WHO. The President of the Ministry of Health of the Canton of Geneva, Prof. P.F. Unger, and Representatives from WHO, GFMER, UNFPA, the Fonds Universitaire Maurice Chalumeau, the Geneva Medical Association, the Société Coopérative Médicale de Beaulieu, and the San Raffaele del Monte Tabor Foundation were addressing the participants and invited guests during the opening ceremony.

(http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education/En/Opening_ceremony_2008.htm)

Participants

There were 28 participants from 24 different nations, 21 of whom received full study grants (see http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education/En/PGC_RH_2008/Participants_RH_2008.htm and http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education/En/PGC_SH_2008/Participants_SH_2008.htm).

Five participants came from Africa, 6 from Europe/ former Eastern Europe, 3 from the Eastern Mediterranean region, 10 from Asia and 4 from South America.

Course programme

Structure

Lectures were held every morning, Monday to Friday, at the WHO. Afternoon sessions provided information about international health issues and offered an insight into WHO's work at the Geneva headquarters and its country activities. Other sessions provided practical guidelines on how to prepare a research proposal/ grant proposal, how to write a scientific paper and how to publish in international medical journals. During the first week, special sessions on the use of Internet and online databases, such as Medline were offered. Technical assistance from GFMER and WHO Library staff was available throughout the course. The teaching and learning approach used combines interactive teaching sessions, based on adult learning principles with e-learning

technology. All lecture materials are available freely to the students via the GFMER website. These online facilities are updated regularly and are accessible to the students throughout the year. During the last week, a visit to CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research (http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/CERN_2008.htm) was organized.

Lectures

Participants from both courses attended the two weeks' course on research methodology, which focused on clinical research issues such as study design, basic statistics, critical appraisal, systematic review of the literature and ethical and human rights issues in research. This was followed by one week of lectures relevant for both areas, reproductive and sexual health. The last week specifically focused either on reproductive health or sexual health research training.

The **Reproductive Health** course comprised four modules: Family Planning; Infertility/ Gynecological Endocrinology; Genital Infections/Sexually Transmitted Infections and Cancers; Obstetrics

(http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/PGC_RH_2008/RH_Lectureplan_2008.htm).

The **Sexual Health** course was structured around the following topics: Research in Sexual Health, Sexuality (function and dysfunction), Sexually Transmitted Infections/Diseases, Sexual Rights and Ethical Issues in Human Research

(http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/PGC_SH_2008/SH_Lectureplan_2008.htm).

Speakers were staff from the WHO Geneva headquarters, lecturers from the Geneva University, GFMER and some invited speakers from academic institutions abroad. More than 50 speakers and tutors were involved in the course.

(http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/Lecturers_2008.htm).

Certification

The course was under the supervision of the scientific committee, comprising members of the GFMER scientific committee, WHO professional staff and representatives of the Fonds Universitaire Maurice Chalmou. The running of the course was overseen by the Scientific Committee, which decided on the scientific content, selected the participants and evaluated them at the end of the course.

In order to obtain the certificate, participants had to pass an exam, consisting of 3 parts:

- a bibliographic review on a topic of their interest, under the supervision of a tutor
- 15 minutes oral presentation of their review
- a multiple choice test

1) Scientific review. During the course, participants had to write a scientific paper which contributed to their final assessment at the end of the course. This 'mini-thesis' gave participants the opportunity to apply the tools they had learned during the course, such as critically appraising the literature, choosing the right study design or systematically reviewing the literature. Throughout the course, participants could get advice from GFMER or WHO staff. The aim was to guide participants in preparing a scientific paper that would lead to a publication in a peer reviewed journal.

2) Oral presentation. Each participant had to present her/his scientific review and respond to the questions of the scientific committee. The aim was that participants learn how to give a presentation, and get confidence in speaking to an audience.

The presentations are available on the GFMER website

http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/PGC_RH_2008/Reviews_Participants_RH_2008.htm

http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/PGC_SH_2008/Reviews_Participants_SH_2008.htm

3) Multiple choice test. The test consisted of 40 questions drawn from the content of the course. The final mark was a combination of all 3 exams parts.

Facilities

Throughout the course, all students had access to personal computers at the library of the Faculty of Medicine and the WHO library with access to Internet and Medline. Basic training on the use of Internet, Medline and PowerPoint was provided. Professional help from librarians could be obtained if necessary.

Accommodation

Most of the participants stayed at 'Mandat International' and at 'City hostel Geneva'.

Follow-up and future projects

- Online Internet fora and e-mail lists are being established to monitor the progress of the research projects, assist participants and encourage exchange of information (<http://www.gfmer.ch/Informatics/elearning.htm> , <http://www.gfmer.ch/Forums/sexualhealthresearch/>).
- Collaboration with participants' institutions has been initiated to enable the dissemination of the Research Training course as previously: (http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/PGC_network.htm).

Funding

The course has been supported by the organizing institutions in collaboration with other Swiss and International Organizations. Funding for scholarships came from sponsors listed below, covering study grants for 21 participants, as follows:

Sponsor	Use
The World Health Organization (RHR/WHO)	7 study grants
Fonds Universitaire Maurice Chalumeau	7 study grants
The International Association for Maternal and Neonatal Health (IAMANEH)	5 study grants
Société Coopérative Médicale de Beaulieu	1 study grant
University of Yamanashi	1 study grant